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## BABBLE OF THE BOULEVARD

(Special Correspondence of THE COLLECTOR)

ALPHONSE DAUDET, who is passing the summer months in his country place at Champrosay, is engaged in revising for early publication a romance entitled "Soutien de Famille." The story deals with the vicissitudes of the family of a wealthy manufacturer, who, suffering business reverses, is driven to suicide. His widow is left with two sons. Upon one she bestows her most tender care and solicitude. For the other she displays the greatest indifference. As the children grow up into manhood the spoiled darling becomes an utter scapegrace, despises and rejects his mother, and refuses her the most common filial assistance. The other, who since his earliest recollection never knew a mother's kiss, proves himself to be a devoted son and man, and one who retrieves through years of work and application the fallen fortunes of his family. As soon as this novel is in the press Daudet intends to commence the translation of a volume written many years ago in the dialect of Provence, and entitled "Mémoires d'un Valet de Ferme." The author was one Baptiste Bonnet, a simple farm laborer, but a man evidently possessed of the genius of both Jasmin and Burns. The book has for a long time enjoyed a wide-spread popularity in the south of France.

When Chateaubriand died in July, 1848, his remains were interred, in accordance with his last wishes, in a tomb built upon the rocky heights of the little island of Grand-Bé, close to the Norman coast, and within sight of the town of St. Malo, where the great diplomat, statesman and romancer was born. For years the island has been the property of the State, and when it was recently announced that the *Administration de Domaines* intended to offer the same for sale by public auction, lovers of the poet and of his works were not slow in protesting against what seemed to them to be a lack of respect on the part of the Government. But notwithstanding a number of articles that appeared in the press begging the authorities to revoke their decision the latter remained inflexible. This week, however, the fact was made known that a number of citizens of St. Malo had subscribed sufficient money to buy the island and present it to their town. Henceforth it will be a portion of the municipality, and papers have already been registered forbidding its being disposed of at any future time. And so it is that the ashes of Chateaubriand may rest in peace. The tomb of the author of "Atala" is impressive in its simplicity. A cross and a granite slab, enclosed within an iron railing, alone mark the last resting place of the champion of the Bourbons. In the winter, when the wind blows from the northwest and the sea becomes angry and boisterous, the spray from the waves, dashing against the crags beneath, mounts high into the air and falling moistens the grave with its tears.

Another desolate and deserted grave which I am in the habit of visiting whenever pleasure or necessity takes me into this corner of France, is one in a churchyard of Caen, where, upon a cheap and crumbling head-stone are inscribed the following words:

GEORGE BRYAN BRUMMEL,  
BORN 1778. DIED 1840.

Here lie the bones of the man who during the first quarter of the nineteenth century was, with the single exception perhaps of the Count d'Orsay, the undisputed arbiter of dress and fashion. Brummel's life is an interesting one. In his younger days he was rich, eccentric, supercilious in his manner to the very nobility itself. His apartments near Grosvenor Square were furnished in the most sumptuous manner, and he possessed a collection of antique silverware and *faïence* of great rarity and value. But misfortune, or, to be more correct, losses at the gaming table, overtook him before he had reached middle life, and in order to escape his creditors, who began to threaten him, he crossed the Straits of Dover one dark and stormy night and landed, after a rough voyage, at Calais. Here, with the frequent pecuniary assistance of the Duchess of York and other of his intimate friends, he managed to exist, until fourteen years later he received the appointment of British Consul at Caen. Though the salary attached to this post was a nominal one the beau was still unable to restrain his passion for the good things of life, and soon, in the midst of financial troubles, he was stricken with paralysis. In quick succession a French gaol, hopeless insanity, and finally in his sixty-second year death in the Bon Sauveur closed the scene upon an ill-spent life, and his poor remains, without a single mourner, were carried to the dreary little Protestant cemetery of Caen, and there, amid a wilderness of weeds and briars, laid at rest forever.

For some reason or other I never think of the death of Brummel without associating it with that of the author of "A Sentimental Journey." The end of Sterne was a sad one, and doubly so when we contrast it with the happy and cheerful disposition of the man. He died deserted and alone in a miserable garret in Bond street, London, with no one at his bedside but one old woman, who began stripping him of his ornaments before even dissolution took place. Tristram

Shandy once observed that it was his wish to die in some quiet inn, with no one but strangers to soothe his last moments. Alas! how these, evidently the sentiments of Sterne himself, were afterwards realized. He was interred in a little cemetery on the Bayswater road, not far from Tyburn Gate, on the morning of March 22, 1768, with but two mourners following the rickety hearse. Three nights after the inhumation his body was stolen by the resurrection men who infested the parish, placed in an old wagon and driven to Trinity College, Cambridge, where it was sold as dissecting material to the Demonstrator of Anatomy. The novelist's library, or what remained of it, was sold by auction after his decease; but the entire amount realized served only to discharge some of the debts he had left behind him.

From the Boulevards to Bond street is a long ride, and I fear that I shall either have to hurry back post-haste to the asphalt, alter the heading of my notes, or else transfer my services to some undertaker's trade journal. But with Daudet at Champrosay, Renan roughing it in another direction, Dumas down at Choisy-le-Roi, Sarcey at the seashore and the artistic fraternity either in Brittany sketching fisher women or at Barbizon amid the enchanting scenes and perfumes of early autumn, one may readily be excused from going afield like the rest. A month hence authors and painters will have terminated their vacations and be making their way back to town again to provide us with fresh literary and artistic fodder. Until then dust and desolation reign supreme.

There are, according to the most recent statistics, 2,133 women in France engaged in literary pursuits. Of these 1,211 write romances and stories for children; 217 educational works, and 280 poetry. The remaining 425 write upon any subject that pays them best. Out of the total of 2,133 there are 1,219 who belong to the *Société des Gens de Lettres*, and 32 to the Society of Dramatic Authors. Although there exist only 237 female journalists, at least 230 of these write nothing but articles on fashion and dress. This leaves but 7 women in the Republic who can call themselves professional newspaper men.

The announcement a few days since in Rouen of the death of a woman named Adrienne Leguay meant little more, to those who saw it, than that a poor creature, almost fifty years of age, had died in a hospital from the effects of carbonic acid poisoning. Yet this woman was the actual heroine of one of Guy de Maupassant's most popular stories. In fact, "*La Boule de Suif*" has, for almost a generation, been known to the frequenters of certain quarters of the old city as one of those wretched beings who ply their trade only after night-fall. As age stole on, however, and "*La Boule*" began to lose those charms which had served her in such good stead since the latter days of the Empire, she was forced to depend almost entirely upon what she could earn by her needle and thread. This, it seemed, was little enough. Poverty and disappointment were followed by downright hunger and want. Like the man who had so dramatically written the history of her youth she finally fell a victim to morphia, until sinking deeper and deeper into the depths of desolation and despair she ended her miserable existence by aid of a charcoal fire.

JOHN PRESTON BEECHER.

PARIS, September 5, 1892.

The historical exhibit at the State Fair at Sacramento, California, is the noteworthy display of articles bearing upon the history of the State before the American occupation. All the old Spanish-Californian families have contributed to the display, which should be secured by San Francisco as a permanent exhibit.

Prof. J. H. Middleton's "Illuminated Manuscripts in Classical and Mediæval Times; their Art and their Technique," published at Cambridge, England, by the University Press, and in New York by Macmillan, contains an answer to almost every question likely to be put concerning its subject. The first four chapters, which relate to the origin of books in all nations prior to the art of printing, ought to be a part of the furniture of every cultivated mind; and the same may be said of chapters x, xiii-xvi. The connection between the art of illumination and that of the weaver, the painter, the designer in stained glass and in mosaic, the jeweler, the goldsmith, is made plain; and, in the chapters not enumerated above, the achievements of the illuminators of the best epoch in each European country are set forth in detail from the finest specimens that have come down to us, with the aid of copious illustrations and abundant bibliographical references. A great deal of subsidiary information is packed away in footnotes, and is sometimes as remote as (for example) the date at which sugar, from being sold by the ounce as a costly drug, came into general use in Europe as an article of food. Prof. Middleton's arrangement is orderly, and his repetitions can readily be forgiven him; but not so the omission of an index, the need of which is crying.